THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

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RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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AN

EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

MEMBERS of the METHODIST SOCIETY IN IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER,

Late Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin.

(Continued.)

BRETHREN,

PERMIT me now to remonstate with you briefly, on some of your errors (as I conceive) in the dictrine of a sinner's *justification*. The thing is of so great importance, that a misapplication of the word cannot but be attended with danger. According to your language, we are to understand by the justification of a sinner, his obtaining a certain sudden feeling in his mind of divine peace and joy. Those who get this, you call *justified;* those who have not got it, you pronounce to be in an unjustified state. And if I ask most of you, upon what ground you think you are justified—that your sins are pardoned, and your persons accepted in the sight of God—you would tell me of a certain day, and hour, and moment, when (as you call it) you *got the peace;* you would tell me of the distressing agonies which preceded it, of the joyful emotions which succeeded it, and of the words of scripture which accompanied it, as if spoken to you with an audible voice. Now I tell you freely that any of you, who possess no better nor surer ground for your confidence than this, are resting your confidence upon a ground, which is indeed most precarious and unscriptural. They who know any thing of the effects of imagination, must know that all this may be nothing more than the effects of an imagination, heated by the expectation of such a feeling, by the earnestness with which you are taught to lash your minds up to the pursuit of it, and by the various accounts you have heard of similar instantaneous impulses on the minds of others. God forbid, therefore, that the christian's hope and confidence should rest on a basis, so uncertain in its nature as this.

SOME of you will be ready to conclude me an enemy to spiritual and experimental religion, because I oppose the favorite current in which your experience runs. But indeed they mistake. I am persuaded that there is no real christianity, but what is the work of the spirit of God; and that work is certainly a matter of experience, from first to last. But

you appear to me greatly to mistake the nature of the work of the spirit, as described in the scriptures. It is not a work by which any *new revelation* is now to be made to individuals; but a work by which they are made to discern, to believe, and to receive the revelation already made, and recorded in the word of God. Each of you is taught to look for a divine revelation to himself, of that which is no where declared in scripture; that his sins are pardoned, that his person is accepted; and to build his persuasion of the truth of this, not upon any thing declared in scripture, but upon the strength of the sudden feeling with which it has been impressed on his mind. Here is enthusiasm indeed; and while I know that the unbelieving world will give the name of enthusiasm, to what is most scriptural and important; for "the things of the spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man;" I know at the same time that there is such an evil as real enthusiasm; and that we are exposed to it, as soon as ever we quit the *word of God*, as the one standard of our faith and of our practice.

This instance of it in your society I consider as productive of consequences the most dangerous. It tends to puff up many with presumptuous confidence and delusive hopes—it tends to weigh down others, whose consciences are more tender, while their fancies are less warm, with as unwarrantable despondency. It tends to turn aside the minds of all, from the one and only sure foundation for a sinner's confidence, which the scriptures reveal—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Believing on him with the heart, trusting in him as he is exhibited in the gospel; the Saviour of his people from their sins—the scriptures warrant me to trust in him with the fullest confidence; to trust in him as my righteousness and strength; and to know that eternal life is mine, as "the gift of God in Him:" and this, without any supplementary revelation, or new voice from Heaven, to announce to me that I am justified. A voice indeed from Heaven, there is; but it is in the word of God, which through all its sacred pages, in the Old Testament and in the New, in the law by the Prophets, and by the Apostles, gives the divine tistimony to the Son of God and man, as the only, the all-sufficient, and the faithful Saviour of all, who believe upon his name. By that precious faith of Him the christian is called to walk; not by sight; not by sense; not by feelings.

This faith, indeed, is productive of feelings the most blessed: but these feelings are not to be put into its place, nor into his; as you confound them, when you give the name of justification to a supposed sensation of it. Peace, and joy, and love are among its heavenly fruits; and they will abound, according to the root of faith, whence they spring, is progressively invigorated. In the infancy of faith, before the believer is yet well acquainted with the 'rock of his salvation,' or sees clearly the way in which he is to walk, these fruits are proportionably weak: tho' there is often, at this period, a natural movement of the animal affections, by the new objects about which they are exercised, which exhibits such a false luxuriance, as is mistaken for a real growth of heavenly tempers. But to represent these real tempers as starting up on a sudden, into their most strong and lively exercise, at the period when faith is most weak, in its first communication to the heart as a grain of mustarp seed—this is contrary to the view of their connexion with faith as

the principle from which they spring.—And to tell a sinner that he must feel this sudden gust of peace and joy, before he can trust that he is "accepted in the beloved," is to lead him to look for the fruit before the tree is planted; and to substitute a spurious peace and joy springing from a spurious faith, for that genuine peace and joy, which are the fruits of genuine faith.

If you ask me, "are all then alike warranted to trust in Christ?" I answer freely—yes; all to whom the word of salvation is sent without exception and without distinction, are *by this word* not only warranted, but called and commanded, to trust in him for that salvation of which he is the only author. All indeed will not obey the gospel: none will but those to whom it is "given to believe;" to whom the gospel "comes not in word only, but also in demonstration and in power." But the unbelief of others is their great sin, which it could not be, if they were not warranted and commanded to believe: and they die in their sins, not because they had no sufficient warrant to trust in Christ for salvation, but because through the wickedness of their hearts they would not come to him that they might have life, but rejected the council of God against themselves; either atheistically indifferent about their state as sinners against God, or proudly endeavoring to recommend themselves to his favor. Such may talk of trusting in Christ for salvation, while they either mean nothing by salvation, but an impunity in walking after the flesh; or mean nothing by trusting in him, but an expectation that, if they acquit themselves sufficiently in getting some preparation or fitness for him he will receive them. But they alike disbelieve the gospel; and whatever form their unbelief assume—whether the gross form of sensual indulgence or the sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion, it will alike prove their condemnation, and alike evinces that they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Indeed, brethren, there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which the gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it; than there is between the latter and any—the most avowedly infidel system—upon which the most profane and irreligious proceed. Examine the two last, in the circumstances which seem the most remote from each other; and you will find the professors of both agree in this essential character: the language of both is—"*Do this and thou shalt live:*" they only differ with respect to the degree and quantity of the work, which is to be done, in order to acceptance with God and eternal life. The profane infidel will say, be honest, or honorable, and do no hurt to any one unless to yourself—or if in the violence of natural passions, which you cannot control, you should do some hurt in the world, make amends for it by your generosity and the goodness of your heart; then fear not—*if* there be a God he cannot condemn you for following the dictates of nature. The zealous religionist, shocked at his profaneness, will assign a much stricter task; and along with a greater quantity of doing, will point you to the aids, which he supposes the gospel offers to the well disposed, and a faithful improvement of which is to help out your insufficiency. To a more regulated outward conduct, he will direct you to add a number of religious forms; and with religious forms, he will call you to combine various religious affections and religious feelings. He

perhaps introduces Christ, in the beginning of his system, as giving all men a sufficiency of materials to set them up in this work, if they choose, and as helping in the work any who are well-disposed to exert themselves diligently in it. And perhaps he introduces Christ, at the end of his system, as making up, by his merits or his mercy, the deficiencies of their doings ; provided these deficiences have not been too great.

THE systems of these two men admit of various modifications, and various shades of colouring, according to the various fancies and tastes of men ; but they both alike, and all the intermediate systems by which the chasm between these is filled up, go upon this principle, that a sinner must obtain justification in the sight of God, by something that he is to do. And a man is not a believer in the gopel, because he thinks that Christ has either lessened the quantity of work to be done, or meets a sinner half way in doing it. The gospel stands removed from, and in opposition to all such systems. Its language is not, " do this and thou shalt live,"—but, " believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It reveals Him, as having " come into the world to save sinners"—even the chief of sinners ; as " giving eternal life to all that the Fatherhath given him." It reveals a view of God, the possibility of which could not have been conceived by any creature without his revelation ; as a " *just God, and a justifier of the ungodly*"----justifying them freely by his grace, not for any works of righteousness, great or small, which they have done or can ever do ; and yet in a way which displays the glories of his righteousness and truth, no less than riches of his mercy and love : giving his own Son to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness ; to bear the sins of many, in his own body on the cross ; to become a curse for them, and the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

THE word of God acknowledges but one work, by doing which any creature can be justified before God; that is the performance of what his Law commands---his own perfect law, holy and righteous and good. The word of God therefore, acknowledges no work,by doing which a sinner (a trangressor of that law) can be justified : and the question, how a sinner can become righteous in the sight of God, must remain unanswerable either from the law, or from any discoveries of human wisdom. The glorious gospel of God our Savious, pervading his whole word, gives the only satisfactory answer to that question : and reveals such a " righteousness of God," or such a way in which God justifies sinners, as magnifies the law which they have violated ; as is infinitely glorifying to him, and unspeakably blessed for them. To know this, is to be wise to salvation ; but the knowledge of it is given from above. It is " foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know" it. All the corruptions of his fallen nature lead him to reject the testimony : and it is just as much rejected by multitudes who call and think themselves christians, as by avowed infidels — The doctrine of a sinner's justification as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus, to every one that believeth, is the essential difference of the gospel, that distinguishes it from all human systems ; and all other ways of justification which men propose to themselves, are alike dishonorable to God ; alike opposed to his word, and alike ruinous to those who walk in them. This doctrine, as Luther justly observed, is the turning-point of a standing or falling

church ; and it may as truly be said to be the turning point of true or false religion. I dwell the longer on this subject, and urge it the more earnestly on your attention, because an error here is indeed a fundamental error ; and how far the doctrine of justification is held in your society, so as to involve a multitude of errors judge ye.

LET me add a few words on your abuse of two other expressions of weighty moment----*repentance* and *conviction* of sin. By the latter, you seem to understand the terror of an alarmed conscience : by the former, that sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation, which arise from such an alarm, before there is any work of saving faith in the heart. Now I conceive that such a sorrow for sin may be most poignant, and such a solicitude about eternal things most lively, where there is no real repentance : and that the conscience may he ever so much terrified, without true conviction of sin.

THAT repentance, which is unto life, is not any thing preceding faith, or unconnected with it : but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God. It is then, and then alone, that we sorrow for sin after a godly manner: it is then, and then alone, that we discern, and are truly engaged by the one thing needful. Any thing called repentance, while we are yet under the power of unbelief, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift ; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil---"only evil continually :" and I would no more be warranted in representing any such infidel repentance, as a preliminary step to faith, than in so representing murder and adultery, I know nothing spiritually good, but those gifts, which the Lord Jesus has "received to bestow on men---yea on the rebellious ;" and nothing preliminary to the reception of them, but that spiritual death, in which all men alike lie by nature, and which makes them need such an omnipotent Saviour. All the "exceeding great and precious promises" in the word of God, are an inventory of those gifts, which He bestows on his redeemed people. Among these promises is that, "I will give them a new heart and a new spirit ; I will put my spirit within them." The great work of his spirit, as a spirit of demonstration and of power, is to glorify Christ and testify of him, by confirming the record which the scriptures bear of Him as the Saviour of sinners : and when the word is made "the sword of the spirit," when the gospel comes "not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" ---in that full persuasion of its truth, which God the Spirit only can produce ; then, and not till then, is that promise fulfilled ; then, and not till then, is there a new heart and a new spirit, in "the spirit of faith." And this is nothing different from that change of mind, which is the simple import of the word translated *repentance*, both in the Greek and in the Hebrew. Before that, there may be changes in the sinner's mind, but they are only various workings of his evil heart of unbelief; various garbs of the old mind, of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God."

WITH respsct to the difference between terror of conscience and conviction of sin, I would observe, that either of these may be without the other. There may be an apprehension of divine wrath, excited perhaps by alarming providences, by lively respresentations of death and

of judgment to come, or by the consciousness of some outwardly gross crime, where there is yet no view of the spirituality, holiness and extent of the divine law; no conviction of its righteousness in denouncing a curse, as the immutable and deserved penalty of every transgression of its commands; no discernment of the root and seat of sin, in a heart and nature fallen and "alienated from the life of God." And there *may be* all these essential characters of true conviction of sin, where, notwithstanding the conscience, cleansed by "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh" peace, is delivered from guilty apprehensions, and where "the spirit of adoption" in the heart enables the sinner to look up to God as a reconciled Father, in him who "has become a curse for us." Nay indeed, it is only in the same believing view of the cross of Christ, which brings peace to the conscience, that a sinner can get the deepest conviction of sin; inasmuch as it is there he beholds at once the most awful display of its demerit, in the sufferings of Him who was "sin for us," and the most glorious discovery of the kindness and love of that God against whom we have sinned, in providing such a sacrifice to take away our sins. Any views of the nature of sin obtained elsewhere than before the cross of Christ, tend to drive a guilty soul from a righteous God, and to involve it in the blackness of despair; but the views of it which are there afforded to the believer, while he "looks upon him whom he has pierced," lead him to the Father of mercies, and lay him low before the throne of grace, and make him abhor himself and renounce all confidence in the flesh. And as this truest conviction of sin begins with the life of faith, so it continues during the believer's course, and is deepened more and more, as he "grows in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

It is not about the meaning of words that I would contend, except so far as they are connected with practical errors of the most dangerous tendency. Let those who are spiritual among you, consider how many evils have arisen from dealing with every man who has a sudden impulse of alarm in his conscience, as if he were therefore convinced of sin: and with every man who, after such an alarm, has a sudden gust of joy, as if he were therefore justified.

But, methinks, I hear the cry of prejudice again; "you are a Calvinist, and a Calvinist is an Antinomian ---and every thing that is bad; in principle at least, if not in practice." I am aware that it is the great labor of your teachers, to instill this prejudice into your minds. But, brethren, if even a Calvinist say what is true, is truth to be rejected because it comes from a Calvinist? Examine what I have written, upon its own intrinsic merits, by the unerring rule of God's word, independent of the enquiry, what the writer is. To that enquiry, however, I shall now proceed to say a few words.

I cannot prevent others from calling me a Calvinist; but it is a name that I never wish to assume; and this, not from any cowardly desire to conceal my views of divine truth, (for I would rejoice to proclaim them to the world) but because I see that the scriptures positively testify against the practice of christians distinguishing themselves, by the names of *human* leaders. If I were to chose any man, by whose name I would distinguish myself, I would be apt to select Paul, and call myself a Paulite. But against this, Paul himself would protest: and shall I call myself a disciple of Calvin?

"But we call you a Calvinist, because your views of scripture are the same with Calvin's." I do not know that. In some points I believe they are; in some, I believe they are not. At any rate, it is not from Calvin's works I have learned them ----for of his works, which I have long possessed in nine ponderous folios, I have never read nine pages, and probably never will. I must decline the admission of any name, which would involve me in the necessity of maintaining all that Calvin has written; nor would I ever wish to descend from the high character of a "servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," to that of a champion for the opinions of any man; much less of one, whose conduct I think, in one instance, very reprehensible; however its guilt may be extenuated by the consideration of the age in which he lived.

"But you evade the point. We call you a Calvinist, because you hold the shocking doctrines of *elections* and the *final perseverance of the saints*." Brethren, I wish not to evade this point; but I wish to clear the ground: and when charges of error are brought against me, I think it desirable that they should be stated definitely, and not in vague and ambiguous terms. I do hold these doctrines which you call shocking; and I am sure Calvin was not the first who held them, nor the only one of his time. If I mistake not they were among the doctrines maintained by all the reformers, against the Popish church; but what is infinitely more important, they are doctrines as clearly revealed, as any others in scripture.

(To be continued.)

Bethelsdorp, Aug. 2d. 1806.

Honored Fathers in Christ,

Your kind letter, written by Mr. Burder, of the 27th Jan. in answer to mine of the 7th Oct. 1805, I received a few days ago, with two other letters to my dear brother Vander Kemp. Before the arrival of the English at the Cape, the missionary work met with increasing opposition, so that, according to the outward appearance, all must have been cut off, if a change had not taken place. On the 7th Feb. I sailed out of Table Bay, with the troops bound for Algon Bay. Little did I think that this circumstance would give me an opportunity of seeing my sinful desire upon my enemy. A few days before the arrival of the English fleet, the Napoleon French privateer had been driven on shore by an English frigate near the Cape. One day, when tacking, we came very near her; I happened to be telling our captain of having been captured in the Duff by the 'Bonaparte,' when he replied, "there, then, lies your enemy; that is the ship that was cruizing off South America the last war." My feelings on the occasion were more than I can express; all my old trials came fresh to my mind, and I could only stand and wonder at the way the Lord hath led me! We had a voyage of twenty-two days, which is sometimes accomplished in four or five. We were in danger of being lost; having no chart of the coast we over-ran the Bay, and came in the night within a quarter of a mile of the rocks before we perceived them. The night before, we were near being destroyed by fire; but He who has delivered, does deliver, and we trust will deliver. I had an opportunity while on board of holding forth the word of life. I arrived at our dear Bethelsdorp on the 1st of March, in

the evening, where I was received with universal joy; even the old Hottentot women, who otherwise could not leave their houses, appeared to give the general acclamations of clapping hands, &c. and I was afraid of being smothered under their caresses. We found the Lord's work prospering at our arrival, many, many thirsting for the water of life. We found our dear mother Smith laboring with great zeal both for the temperal and spiritual welfare of our people, of whom we shall give a more particuler account in our Report.

Now, dear Fathers, I hope to experience a further interest in your favor and prayers. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon all your labors of love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I remain,

Your unworthy son, and

Willing servant for Christ,

JAMES READ,

THE BUTTERFLY.

By Mrs. Steele.

Pretty vagrant of the air,
Emblem of the thoughtless fair;
Near akin their life and thine,
Both a fleeting summer shine.
Short delight your Charms impart,
Charms to catch the human heart;
Hearts that can be caught with show,
The virtuoso or the beau.
Tho'tless nymphs are butterflies,
Different species, larger size:
Strangers both to needful care,
Fluttering, roving here and there;
Basking in the vernal ray,
Trifling out the summer's day:
Summer's day; from youth to age,
Trifles all their care engage:
But when wintry storms arise,
Beauty fades and pleasure dies;
Me let nobler cares employ,
Cares which terminate in joy,
Ere the summer sunbeams flee,
Let me, like the frugal bee,
Well improve the smiling hour,
Gathering sweets from every flower.
O may virtue's charms be mine,
Charms that still increasing shine!
These will cheer the wintry gloom,
These will last beyond the tomb.

Reflection.

Although a person be possessed of health, wealth, wit, knowledge, beauty and polite accomplishments, yet, without virtue, he cannot be happy. But in virtue *alone* is happiness.

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